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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 FREETOWN 000316

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FOR AF/W

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SL](#)  
SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE'S JULY 5 ELECTIONS: MULTILATERAL  
EFFORTS UNDERWAY

REF: A. FREETOWN 305  
[1](#)B. FREETOWN 300

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JUNE CARTER PERRY REASON 1.4 B/D

[1](#)1. (C) As indicated in ref A, International Community (IC)Partners agreed to provide support and encouragement (as well as funding) to help guide Sierra Leone's July 5th local elections to the kind of success experienced in the country's 2007 national races. To date, these have included actions to ensure the GoSL's public endorsement of free, fair and peaceful elections. Ambassador met privately June 20 with the Presidential Press Secretary to recommend that the President come forward with a public statement against violence and support for free elections following allegations of candidate intimidation and harassment. Such a statement, we suggested, would strengthen the GoSL's credibility as a democratic nation. Last week, the head of state issued such a call for peaceful elections.

#### Spreading the Word Far Afield

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[1](#)2. (C) The Acting Executive Representative of the UN Secretary General (A/ERSG) Michael v. der Schulenburg, EMBOFFS and other diplomatic mission representatives visited several towns within Sierra Leone to meet with party leaders and encourage them to act responsibly as the election approaches. The international donors mission was covered in the local press and welcomed by candidates and others amidst allegations of violence against opposition members in the North Eastern portion of Sierra Leone. A full report on the delegation's mission will follow septel.

#### U.S. Public Statements

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[1](#)3. (C) In Freetown, the U.S. Ambassador spoke at a public forum organized by the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) on June 26 to address independence of voters and candidates alike and to condemn harassment of female candidates. Sierra Leone's First Lady spoke on the same platform. (Note: The First Lady's family has been accused of playing a role in pressing candidates to run for the ruling party or withdraw. End Note.) While stressing she could not make "political" statements, Mrs. Koroma spoke strongly about the need for women to remain actively engaged in the political process. The PPRC is a USG-funded organization that monitors political party activities. We also held a training seminar in Freetown for Embassy election observers and spoke about the need for free and fair elections. During a June 20th press conference, Ambassador called for a secure, non-violent process.

¶4. (C) During the weeks of June 23 and 30, U.S. and U.K. Chiefs of Mission have been collaborating closely to reinforce the message of continued steps toward a solid, sustainable democracy in talks with party leaders, civil society and government. The British met with ruling party and opposition leaders in Freetown last week; we held similar exchanges country-wide and met with the National Electoral Commission (NEC). The message of the IC is one of unity and freedom. In that regard, the UN leadership also expects to discuss overall election activities during this final week with political parties leaders.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Perry and Poloff met with the Majority Leader in Parliament, Edward Turay, on June 30. The purpose of the meeting was to call to the Majority Leader's attention the numerous allegations of political intolerance and threatening behavior by APC supporters towards female and independent candidates. The meeting also served as a reminder that the United States and the international community at large is concerned about the democratic integrity of the local elections on July 5. Turay was receptive to the message that these elections must operate freely and transparently, and that party leaders play a critical role in advocating for peace amongst their supporters. He said he had previously spoken with the President and Vice President to voice his own concerns regarding the allegations that political intimidation is being instigated from the highest levels. Turay pledged to

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make a statement in Parliament this week requesting that all parties follow the agreed-upon codes of conduct, as well as to encourage constituents to respect the democratic process for which Sierra Leone has become a model.

¶6. (C) Comment: Post will report separately on field/provincial talks and campaign tactics. It has been the international community's intent to make clear to government that it must take a leadership role in stepping forward to reassure the public that the local elections will run smoothly and freely. Our conversations with public and private sector representatives have pointed to overall lower tensions than in the 2007 national elections. The one exception is the sensitive North Eastern section of the country, which was a difficult area in which to keep peace during the 2007 Presidential elections. The UN has already encouraged Sierra Leone security and police to increase its policing in the region. U.S. engagement at the political level, as well as through on-the-ground programs such as voter/candidate/political party support by PPRC, NDI and IFES will continue through election day - July 5th- and during the aftermath as results roll out. End Comment  
PERRY